

SB 1471 (Kuehl)

California Community Sexual Health Education Act

Sponsors: Planned Parenthood & ACLU

SB 1471 will provide needed guidance to state agencies that fund or administer community-based programs or public education campaigns in order to ensure that California has a consistent and effective approach for preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Research shows that comprehensive sexual education, utilizing programs that teach about both abstinence and contraception, is more effective in assisting young people to make healthy decisions about sex. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Institute of Medicine, Office of National AIDS Policy, National Institutes of Health, Society for Adolescent Medicine, and the Surgeon General of the United States all have published research analyses supporting the effectiveness of comprehensive sex education.

According to a recent Public Policy Institute of California statewide survey, “California adults overwhelmingly support comprehensive sex education programs that include information on abstinence, condoms and contraception.” The report found, “At a time when abstinence-only programs are in vogue at the federal level, the vast majority of Californians (78%) – including Latinos (74%) and evangelical Christians (66%) – prefer sex education programs that also teach children about obtaining and using contraceptives. One explanation for the strong support: Residents believe deterrence works. Most say sex education in schools is at least somewhat effective in helping teens avoid pregnancy (62%) and sexually transmitted diseases (71%), with public school parents even more likely to hold these views than the general public.” PIPC Statewide Survey: Special Survey on Population, December 2005, by Mark Baldassare.

Though public health research and public opinion overwhelmingly support comprehensive sexual health education, our state, unfortunately, still funds biased and incomplete sexual health education programs in our communities, depriving the people served by those programs of much needed basic information about sexuality and reproductive health.

In 2003 the legislature passed SB 71 (Kuehl), Chapter 650, Statutes of 2003, requiring sexual health education taught in public schools to be comprehensive, medically accurate, bias-free and age appropriate. SB 1471 (Kuehl) simply extends basic standards for sexual health education and HIV/AIDS prevention education that govern those programs in our schools to other state-funded sexual health education efforts.

California cannot afford to waste scarce state dollars for teen pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted disease prevention on programs that have not been proven to be effective.